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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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CHANNEL ISLANDS SANCTUARY DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has released the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for public comment. The plan is the result of several years of study, planning, and extensive public input.

"The Draft Management Plan was developed with extensive community involvement and we welcome public review and comment on the future management of the sanctuary," said Chris Mobley, sanctuary superintendent. "The new management plan charts a forward-looking course to protecting the rich marine ecosystems of the sanctuary while continuing to allow for compatible human uses."

The draft plan, a major revision of the sanctuary's original 1983 management plan, focuses on public awareness and understanding, conservation science, water quality, emergency response and enforcement, maritime heritage, sanctuary operations and performance evaluation. The draft environmental impact statement analyzes a range of alternatives for modified and new regulations. Proposed changes to regulations are intended to clarify and strengthen protections for marine habitats, sensitive species, water quality, and submerged cultural and historic resources.

The draft management plan does not propose the establishment of marine reserves (no-take areas) or marine conservation areas (limited-take areas) within the sanctuary; that action will be considered later this year as part of a separate NOAA environmental review and public process. Additionally, the draft management plan does not propose a sanctuary boundary expansion at this time, but rather calls for the continuation of a comprehensive, scientifically based public process that will lead to a sound decision.

Periodic management plan review is required by Congress for each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries to ensure that they continue to conserve, protect, and enhance their nationally significant living and cultural resources while allowing compatible commercial and recreational activities.

All comments must be received by July 21, 2006, at the sanctuary office at 113 Harbor Way, Suite 150, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93109, by email at cinms.mgtplan@noaa.gov, or by fax at (805) 568-1582.

Public hearings will be held at the following dates and times:

- Tuesday, June 27, 2006, 6:15–9:00 pm
Sheraton Four Points hotel
San Buenaventura Ballroom
1050 Schooner Drive
Ventura, Calif.

- Thursday, June 29, 2006, 6:15–9:00 pm
Earl Warren Showgrounds
Warren Hall
3400 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Copies of the draft management plan are available at the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary office or by calling (805) 884-1464. The draft plan can also be reviewed at the web site channelislands.noaa.gov, or requested by e-mail from mp.request@noaa.gov.

The Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary encompasses the four northern Channel Islands (San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Anacapa) and Santa Barbara Island off the coast of southern California. With marine boundaries extending from the mean high tide of the islands' shores to six nautical miles offshore, the sanctuary spans approximately 1,243 square nautical miles. The sanctuary supports a rich and diverse range of marine life and habitats, unique and productive oceanographic processes and ecosystems, and culturally significant resources such as hundreds of shipwrecks and submerged Chumash cultural artifacts. This diversity, along with the busy Santa Barbara Channel, also brings significant human use and value to sanctuary waters, including commercial fisheries, recreational fishing opportunities, marine wildlife viewing, boating and other recreational activities, maritime shipping, nearby offshore oil and gas development, research and monitoring activities, and numerous educational activities. Designated in 1980, the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary is the nation's fourth largest national marine sanctuary.

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program, managed by NOAA's National Ocean Service, seeks to increase the public awareness of America's marine resources and maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, the program manages 13 national marine sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve that together encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department. NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 61 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

On the Internet:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Ocean Service: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Program: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary: <http://channelislands.noaa.gov>